

REMARKS

Claims 1, 7-10, 12, and 41 are pending.

DRAWINGS

The Examiner has not referred to his previous objections of the drawings in the Office Action mailed October 31, 2005. As such, Applicants believe that this objection has been withdrawn and thank the Examiner accordingly.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

The Examiner has maintained his rejection of claim 41 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,914,736 to Coutu ("Coutu"). See pages 5-6 of the Office Action.

Applicant has discovered a flexible joint assembly that includes a joint assembly inlet, a joint assembly outlet and a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet. The flow path includes a first pivot joint, a second pivot joint, each including a retaining ring compressing the supporting member and the sealing member by threadably connecting to a surface of the receiving member adjacent to the central fluid connector and the inner member. See claim 41.

Coutu discloses "unions for connecting pipe and pipe fittings and provides a coupling having a swivel joint." See lines 1-3. Coutu does not describe or teach a retaining ring threadably connecting to a surface of the receiving member *adjacent to the central fluid conductor*" See claim 41. Fig. 2A of the present invention shows the retaining ring 340 compressing the supporting member 330 and the sealing member 320. The threadable connection to the surface of the receiving member adjacent to the central fluid connector refers to a surface that is interior to the receiving member. See Fig. 2A of the present invention. The surface of the socket or receiving member adjacent to the central fluid connector is an interior surface and this is clarified in claims 1 and 41 which indicate that the surface is adjacent to the

central fluid conductor and the ball. Contrary to the present invention, Coutu's invention describes a retaining ring 8 that has a threadable connection on an exterior surface of a socket, which is not adjacent to the central fluid conductor. See Fig. 3 of Coutu. For convenience, the two drawings are shown side-by-side below:

Accordingly, independent claim 41 is not anticipated by Coutu. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

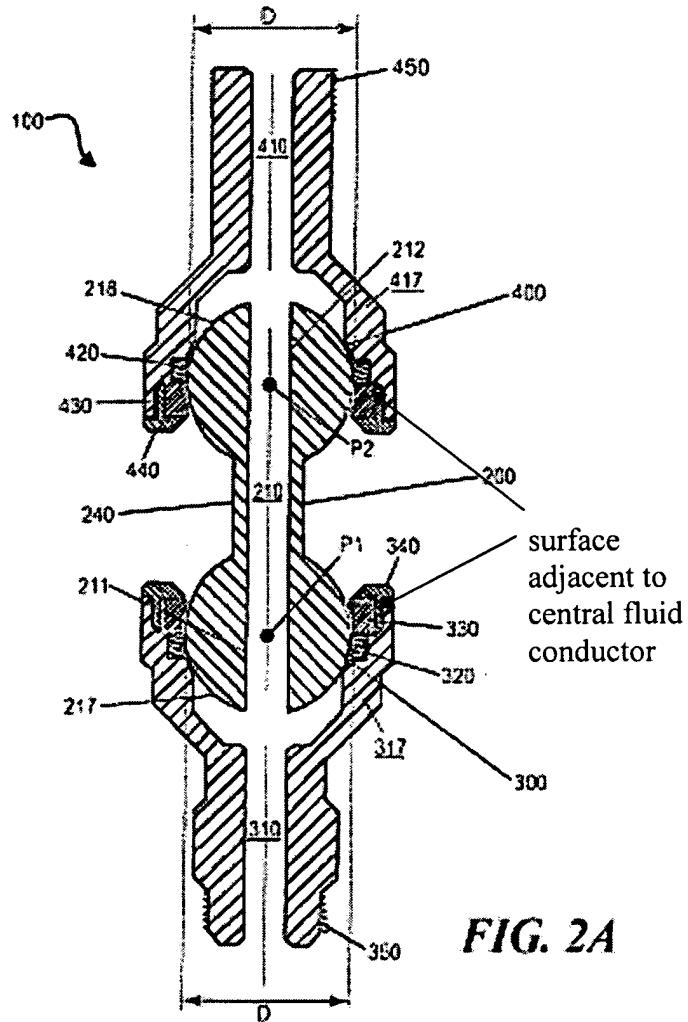
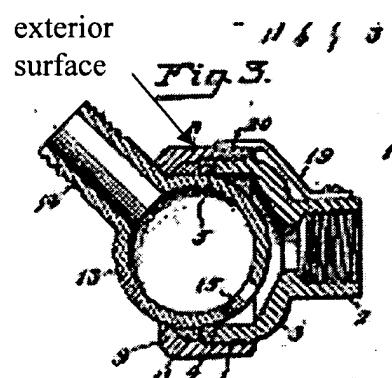


FIG. 2A

Present Invention -Fig. 2A



Coutu -Fig. 3

Rejection of claims under 35. U.S.C. §103(a)

Coutu

The Examiner has maintained his rejection of claims 1, 7, 10, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 1,914,736 to Coutu. Claims 7, 10, and 12 depend from independent claim 1.

Applicant has discovered a flexible joint assembly including a first pivot joint and second pivot joint, each including a retaining ring compressing a seal by threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor and the ball. See claim 1.

As previously explained and illustrated by the comparison of Fig. 2A from the present invention and Fig. 3 from Coutu, Coutu's invention describes a retaining ring 8 that has a threadable connection on an exterior surface of a socket, which is not adjacent to the ball. Coutu does not teach or suggest a threadable connection to the surface of the receiving member adjacent to the central fluid connector which refers to a surface that is interior to the receiving member. See Fig. 2A of the present invention. Accordingly, Coutu does not teach or suggest a retaining ring compressing a seal by threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor and the ball in claim 1. As such claim 1, and claims that depend therefrom are patentable over Coutu. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Morrison in view of Shames

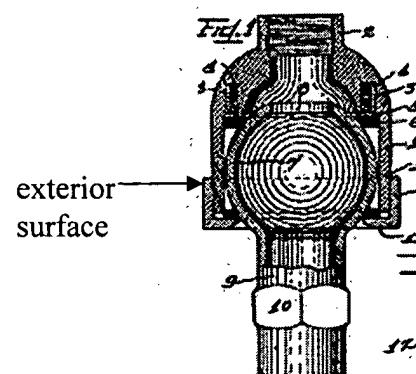
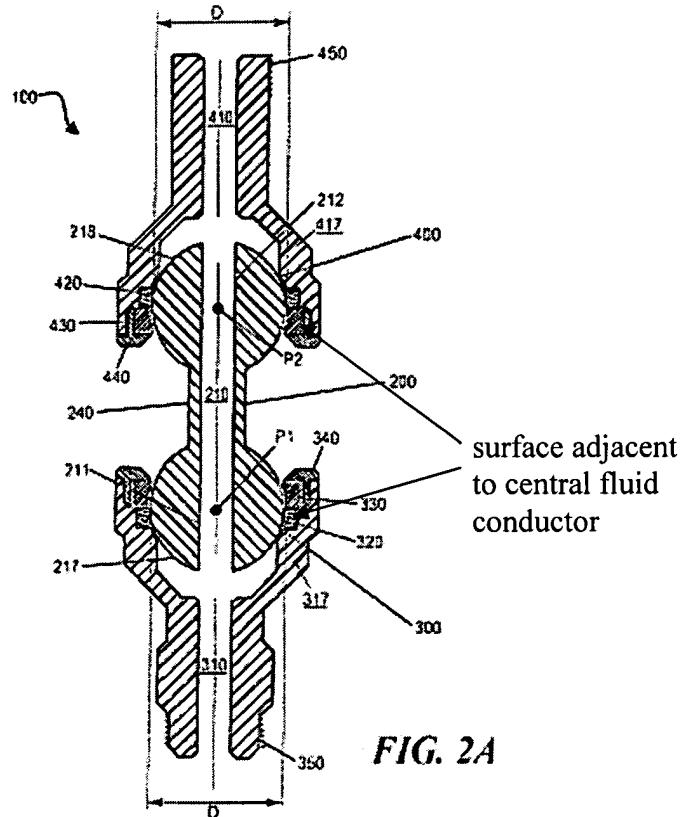
The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 7, 10, 12 and 41 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 1,532,195 to Morrison ("Morrison") in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,971,701 to Shames et al. ("Shames"). Claims 7, 10, 12 and 42 depend from independent claim 1. Claim 41 is an independent claim.

Applicant has discovered a flexible joint assembly including a first pivot joint and second pivot joint, each including a retaining ring compressing a seal by threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor. See claims 1 and 41.

Morrison discloses "an improved type of swivel joint coupling of the ball and socket construction." See page 1, lines 14-16. Contrary to the Examiner's assertions that "Morrison discloses a retaining ring 28 threadably connected to a surface of the socket 15 adjacent to the fluid connector 22 ...," Morrison discloses using a collar 12 that threadably connects to a surface opposite a fluid connector. See Figure 1 of Morrison. Morrison does not teach or suggest a retaining ring threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor.

Shames does not remedy the above-mentioned defects in Morrison. Shames discloses a coupling nut 76" that threadably connects to an outer surface or exterior surface of aerator 104, which is the surface opposite to connector 102. See Figures 4 and 5 of Shames. Shames does not teach or suggest a retaining ring threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor. See claims 1 and 41. Shames further does not teach or suggest a retaining ring compressing a seal. Rather, Shames describes and teaches "sealing 'with the pressure' of the liquid that is flowing through the device." See col. 3, lines 70-71.

For convenience, drawings from the present invention, Morrison and Shames are presented below.



Applicant : Steven M. Knowles
Serial No. : 09/982,928
Filed : October 22, 2001
Page : 9 of 9

Attorney's Docket No.: 14921.0015

depend therefrom are patentable over the Morrison and Shames. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending rejections. Applicant believes that the claims now pending are in condition for allowance.

Should any fees be required by the present Reply, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account **19-4293**.

If, for any reason, a telephonic conference with the Applicant would be helpful in expediting prosecution of the instant application, the Examiner is invited to call Applicant's Attorney at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 1-30-06



Harold H. Fox
Reg. No. 41,498

Customer Number: 27890
STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP
1330 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-429-3000
Fax: 202-429-3902